

Other Issues

Health Care

The combination of soaring health insurance premiums and a harsh economic downturn threaten to dramatically increase the number of Americans without health insurance, particularly in California. The Census Department estimated that 41.2 million Americans were uninsured in 2001, up 1.4 million from the previous year. This situation could get far worse unless government takes substantial action to stop it.

Zoe believes that building upon existing programs - Medicare, Medi-Cal, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and COBRA continuation coverage - is the most effective way to reduce the ranks of the uninsured and strengthen our public health system. The Republicans' proposals for tax credits to individuals to purchase their own coverage are fraught with difficulties. There is no guarantee that these credits would actually deliver quality coverage to families, although it is quite sure they would benefit large insurance companies.

Employer-based Health Insurance: Zoe strongly supported Democratic efforts in the 107th Congress to subsidize 75% of COBRA continuation costs so Americans who lost their jobs after September 11th did not also lose their health insurance coverage.

Medicare: The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 drastically reduced Medicare payments to hospitals, physicians, home health providers, and nursing homes. Five years later, the cumulative effect of these payments is forcing some health care providers to start refusing new Medicare patients. Congress must act urgently to reverse those cuts in order to protect access to quality health care for seniors and the disabled. This is an area where Republicans and Democrats agree.

Given this agreement, I was disappointed that the House Republican leadership cynically decided this summer to link the Medicare reimbursement issue with the more controversial prescription drug issue in one gigantic Medicare Modernization bill that passed the House this June. I am eager to support a stand-alone effort to increase funding for Medicare providers.

Prescription Drugs: Our elderly and disabled have waited long enough for a prescription drug benefit in Medicare. Seniors deserve relief from the high cost of prescription drug prices. My Democratic colleagues and I are fighting to enact a real Medicare

prescription drug benefit that is affordable and dependable for all beneficiaries with no gaps or gimmicks in coverage. We are also fighting to give the Secretary of Health and Human Services the ability to renegotiate with the big drug companies for lower drug prices for our seniors.

Medi-Cal: Zoe has worked with Members of the California delegation to address the special needs of our state. California's safety net hospitals are already stretched to the limit caring for the 6 million Medi-Cal beneficiaries and 6.3 uninsured patients in California. Now is the absolute wrong time to cut the payments we make to disproportionate share hospitals (DSH) that care for large numbers of uninsured patients.

Stem Cells: Zoe supports stem cell research and cosponsored stem cell legislation as part of the House Democrats 100 Hours Agenda. Many Americans, young and old, may benefit from the research and new therapies that may arise from research and development of therapies based upon embryonic stem cells. We should do all we can to alleviate the pain and suffering of the over 100 million Americans who struggle daily with diseases like cancer, heart disease, diabetes, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, and many others.

Federal policy should help promote the enormous potential of this research. Instead, the Bush Administration's policy has placed severe limits on federal funding by restricting the embryonic stem cell lines that had been developed as of August 9, 2001. Hopefully, President Bush will finally put partisan politicking aside and sign this legislation to ensure that this research can fulfill its potential to make new treatments possible and to answer the prayers of many who seek new treatments and or cures for themselves and their loved ones.

Product Safety

Rep. Zoe Lofgren's downloadable toy safety guides for the 2008 holiday season. The guides, available in English and Spanish, are available for download below. Please note the guides are Adobe Acrobat files.

English Language Guide

Spanish Language Guide